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NEWS RELEASE

Feb. 2, 2009

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UM EDUCATOR'S RESEARCH FEATURED IN SMITHSONIAN EXHIBITION

MISSOULA —

University of Montana anthropology Assistant Professor Ashley McKeown's research that involves skeletons of early 17th-century Jamestown, Va., colonists will be featured in an exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History.

"Written in Bone: Forensic Files of the 17th-Century Chesapeake" will be at the Washington, D.C., museum from Feb. 7, 2009, through Feb. 6, 2011.

Founded in 1607, Jamestown was the first permanent English colony in the New World.

During a three-year postdoctoral fellowship prior to joining the UM faculty, McKeown worked with anthropology curator Douglas Owsley of the Smithsonian museum and archaeologists at the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities' Jamestown Rediscovery project to excavate and analyze more than 75 burials from Jamestown. Her work revealed the bone biographies of some of the earliest colonists — many nameless men, women and children who made the colony succeed.

McKeown assisted with the excavation and analysis of more well-known individuals, such as Cap. Bartholomew Gosnold, one of the founders of the Jamestown expedition and the explorer who named Martha's Vineyard after his daughter. Gosnold died at Jamestown on Aug. 22, 1607, and in 2003 his grave was located just outside the original James Fort palisade.

Also featured in the exhibition are skeletons recovered from St. Mary's City, the first capital of Maryland, and burials from around the Chesapeake.

McKeown analyzed the skeleton of a young female found buried under a theater in Williamsburg, Va., and, based on tooth modification, was able to determine that she was an enslaved African from the central West African coast.

The interpretation of the lives of 17th-century colonists, both the famous and the mundane, are presented in the wide-ranging exhibition that seeks to inform visitors about life and death in the early Chesapeake, an area that gave rise to many of the nation's most famous leaders.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Another story about McKeown's work is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/urelations/Rview/winter05/talking.htm>.

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